



ロビーナ ハイ スクールの
日本語のイマージョン プログラム
JAPANESE IMMERSION at ROBINA HIGH SCHOOL

HISTORY OF JAPANESE LEARNING AT ROBINA HIGH

Robina High School has always been a vibrant Language learning environment. When many state schools were phasing out compulsory Year 8 Language learning, Robina High School was one of the few state secondary schools in South East Queensland to maintain a compulsory one year Language Program for Year 8. The school also offers German but Japanese has always been a much more popular curriculum option.

WHY JAPANESE IMMERSION AT ROBINA HIGH

There are a variety of reasons why students of Robina High choose to continue their Japanese studies. These reasons influenced the school community to implement the Japanese Immersion program. Some of these reasons are:

- ✚ The primary feeder schools of Robina High all offer Japanese in upper primary. The teachers of these schools are committed and professional practitioners who work with Robina High staff to ensure an appropriate continuity of Language learning occurs.
- ✚ The general teaching staff and school administration are very supportive of Language learning. It is given appropriate support and influence on the curriculum and our school culture. Regular Japanese events and visitors are a natural and valued part of our school curriculum.
- ✚ The Japanese teachers at Robina High are very motivated and capable and they implement appropriate and interesting Japanese language programs.
- ✚ The Gold Coast, Queensland and Australia still values Japanese communication ability- especially on the Gold Coast - and there is much parental support and student interest for continuing Japanese Language studies for future employment.
- ✚ The Gold Coast has a developing Japanese Community made up of native speaker and blended families many of whom choose to attend Robina High and support our Language program.
- ✚ Japanese culture is quite popular with our students who are keen to pursue their interests in manga, karaoke, Japanese food, Taiko, Japanese Martial Arts and other aspects of Japan.
- ✚ Japanese at Robina High is seen as a valuable academic option that will positively contribute to life skills and assist university studies in a variety of ways (study skills, memory capacity, university bonus points)

In 2007 when Robina High discussed increasing its academic excellence curriculum, Japanese Immersion became an obvious option. The school had motivated students, parents and curriculum managers for such a program. Visits to the Chinese Immersion Program at Varsity College indicated that an Asian Language Immersion program was indeed possible, albeit more challenging to implement due to the reading and writing skills required for engaging with Asian script. Meetings were held with feeder primary schools and relevant EQ personnel to discuss this innovative idea.

In order to see an effective Japanese Immersion course in action, school staff traveled to Huntingdale Primary School in Victoria. Huntingdale has an amazing program where the entire school participates in a bi-lingual Japanese Immersion Program. Excited by what they saw, Robina Staff returned to develop their own program: the only Secondary Japanese Immersion Program in Australia.

In 2008 the Robina State High School Japanese Immersion Program (RSHSJIP) was born.

WHO STUDIES JAPANESE IMMERSION

The program began with two classes of students. 25 students from local primary schools enrolled in the first Year 8 JIP class and 25 students from Year 9 elected to do a two year Immersion program – commencing in Year 9. The Year 9 students were keen and able graduates of the Year 8 Japanese course and they were highly motivated about enrolling in the new Immersion option. They were quite clear about the difficulty they would face starting JIP in Year 9 and only completing a two year program. But for them and their parents, missing the JIP opportunity was not an option. Interestingly enough, these students graduated with excellent results. Having two classes also assisted with the justification of employing two new Immersion teachers in the first year of the program.

From 2009 the JIP program has had a class of motivated and able Year 8, 9 and 10 students.

The prospective student must have a clear and sustainable motivation to be enrolled in the program in order to succeed. This motivation must be much more than “I like Japanese”. There is little opportunity to study LOTE style Language in the Immersion course. A desire to excel, be challenged and work with other academically able students is necessary. Able refers to academic ability and appropriate personality, both of which are necessary for program success. Academically, a sound B student across all subjects is a minimum. However, an A in primary Maths is preferred. An appropriate personality is one that can cope with challenge and stress, enjoys taking risks, responds well to failure and criticism, maintains a positive problem solving approach in stressful situations, is patient and capable of perseverance and is open to new ideas. Experience has shown that the personality determines success more than the academic ability.

Native speakers in immersion programs are a contentious issue amongst immersion practitioners. At Robina High, students who have one parent who is a native speaker MAY be able to enroll in the course. The decision will depend on their Japanese language proficiency and their personality. The decision is made on a case by case basis.

THE JAPANESE IMMERSION CURRICULUM

The JIP is a three year course which runs from Year 8 to Year 10. Students study Maths, Science and Computers in Japanese. The Maths and Science course is based on the Extension Maths and Science Curriculum. In year 10 Science is comprised of one semester of Physics and one semester of Chemistry. The computer course covers general computer applications in Year 8 & 9 and becomes Asian Business Studies in Year 10.

The JIP curriculum content remains the same as mainstream courses but JIP students receive all instruction in Japanese. Of course it requires more time to teach and learn this content due to the language learning required so extra time must be allocated somehow from the non - immersion curriculum. At Robina High JIP students do not study “Language” (LOTE). Instead Language Class contact time is given to Immersion and relabelled “Science Language” & “Maths Language”. This means that no Language studies are actually undertaken in most of the immersion course.

In Semester two Year 10 students are enrolled in an accelerated Japanese course where they cover all the essential Year 8-11 Japanese grammar that they have not encountered during their immersion course. Students then have the option to enrol in Year 12 Japanese in Year 11 if they wish. In year 12 JIP students have a number of options including enrolling in a University course, studying a new subject or taking free study time to assist with other coursework.

CHALLENGES for JAPANESE IMMERSION

The focus of the immersion course is on CURRICULUM and not on LANGUAGE. It is imperative that we maintain the integrity of our course and ensure we are covering all essential curriculum topics/skills. Graduates from our Immersion course will move into our most challenging academic subjects in senior and we need to ensure we have no gaps in their learning.

A curriculum focus means that we focus on COMPREHENSION and that lessons are often teacher centred. It is challenging to develop writing and speaking skills in the immersion environment. It is especially challenging

for Asian Language immersion programs. Students of Japanese immersion develop excellent comprehension skills of spoken Japanese and are able to read a wide range of kanji and script. The challenge is to find time to develop their writing and speaking skills –especially speaking.

JAPANESE IMMERSION TEACHING STAFF

It is essential that immersion staff are not just fluent speakers but also competent practitioners of their subject area. Staff must have a thorough knowledge of the Queensland Curriculum in addition to fluency in Japanese. In order to cater for all learners there are three immersion teachers at Robina High. Each teacher specializes in one subject area (Maths, Science or Computers). There is a balance of male and female speakers. Currently two native speakers and one non-native speaker who is fluent in Japanese are employed to teach the course.

The manager of the Japanese Immersion Program at Robina High is Mrs. Sellina McCluskey. She has been a competent senior teacher of Japanese for about 20 years and Head of Department for 15 years. Sellina has expertise in public relations and promotions and teacher education. These have all been vital for the developing immersion program. She liaises with the HODs of Maths, Science and Computers to ensure that these Learning Areas are being supported appropriately in the immersion course.

SUPPORTING LEARNERS of JAPANESE IMMERSION

Staff support students in a variety of ways:

- ✚ Study skill workshops are held with parents annually
- ✚ A study buddy program is developed between students so they can support each other
- ✚ Staff hold tutorials after school to provide extra assistance
- ✚ The staff continually monitor student progress and employ early intervention strategies
- ✚ When students sit for exams they are given extra time for “JSL” following ESL guidelines
- ✚ There is always an English question on exams to allow articulate responses for higher order thinking questions
- ✚ Enjoyable activities of a cultural nature are included as often as possible to allow a relaxation from the challenging curriculum

POSITIVE OUTCOMES for LEARNERS of JAPANESE IMMERSION

- ✚ Students’ results show very pleasing trends. When the results of immersion classes are compared with non immersion classes, immersion classes achieve higher results- without even considering the added difficulty of the language.
- ✚ Many individual students have shown positive improvements in their results and behaviour and parents attribute this directly to their learning experiences in immersion.
- ✚ The inaugural JIP class of 2009 were able to be credited with Year 8 – 11 Japanese and are performing favourably in the Year 12 Japanese tests/assessments.
- ✚ A successful one month study tour in Japan in 2009 was conducted for the graduating class of 2009. Annual tours will be offered to all graduating students.
- ✚ Graduates of Japanese immersion say they have developed many skills that will assist them in senior studies and beyond, not the least of which is memory capacity, study skills, improved attention spans, persistence and resilience.

The RSHJIP is only three years old but the school community is already delighted with the positive outcomes of the program. Many stakeholders have expressed an interest in supporting the program including the Consulate General of Japan and Curriculum Branch of Education Queensland. The Robina High School Community looks forward to developing the program in the best interests of its students in the future.

For more information about the innovative Japanese Immersion Program at Robina High please contact Mrs. Sellina McCluskey on smccl13@eq.edu.au or visit the school's website www.robinashs.eq.edu.au